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Introduction to the Swedish society

On the following page you will find information regarding what types of assistance your receiving municipality can offer you, how you get started with your new life in Sweden as well as what types of integration support will be available to you.

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Summary

- Your municipality will help you with accommodation and starting your life in Sweden.

- You need to register as a Swedish resident with the Swedish Tax Agency in order to get a Swedish personal identity number. You need a personal identity number to be able to use, for example, public services. Therefore, visit the Swedish Tax Agency as soon as you can.
- The establishment programme is for adults aged 18-64 years, both men and women. You will study the Swedish language, do a social orientation course and be given guidance about how to find a job in Sweden. You can participate in the programme for up to two years.
- When you participate in the establishment programme, you can apply for financial support from the government to help you cover your living expenses.
- Children and young people start school shortly after arrival. School for children is compulsory and free of charge.
- If you are 65 years or older, you will not participate in the introductory programme. You can still look for work. If you do not have a job, you can apply for financial support from the government.
- The Swedish language is an important part of your integration process and there are several ways to learn the language.
- When you arrive in Sweden, you will be in contact with many different people, such as representatives from the municipality, case officers at the Swedish Public Employment Service, teachers and healthcare staff. They will assist you, introduce you to Swedish society, and answer questions.

Support from your municipality

In Sweden, there are 290 municipalities, each of which is geographically defined. Each municipality has its own decision-making organisation. Municipalities are responsible for schools, care for the elderly and family support, among other things.

The municipality in which you are placed will support you in starting your life in Sweden. Municipalities work in different ways and the support they provide may differ.

It is difficult to give exact information about your arrival, but generally, the municipality is responsible for:

- having accommodation ready for you when you arrive in Sweden
- providing Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) classes, a social orientation course and other adult education
- school, preschool and childcare
- informing you how to register as a Swedish resident with the Swedish Tax Agency
- informing you how to book a meeting with the Swedish Public Employment Service
- guiding you how to apply for financial support
- informing you about how to find healthcare providers
- providing you with language support or an interpreter when you are in contact with government agencies. You must mention your need for language support or an interpreter when you book any appointments so that this can be arranged for you.

Register as a resident in Sweden

When you arrive in Sweden, you must register as a Swedish resident. You do this at the Swedish Tax Agency. This means that the Swedish Tax Agency enters your personal data in its register of Swedish residents. Registration is mandatory and a requirement for obtaining a Swedish personal identity number and an identity card. You need the identity number and identity card to use most public services.

It may take some time after you register before you receive your personal identity number and identity card. Therefore, it is important that you register as soon as possible.

[Read more about starting your life in Sweden External link, opens in new window.](#)

Health examination

After your arrival in Sweden, you will be offered a health examination, with an interpreter present. This is voluntary and free of charge.

It is important you provide information about any medical conditions or health problems that you may have, both physical and mental, so that you can receive the correct help and care. The doctor and the interpreter are required by law to keep all information about your health and your private life confidential. This means that they cannot share such information with anyone else without your permission, not even with your family members.

You must provide information about any medication that you need as soon as possible, either during your health examination or to municipality staff when you arrive. In order to buy certain medicines in Sweden, you must speak to a doctor first.

Establishment programme for adults

All adults between the ages of 20 and 64 are covered by the establishment programme, which you participate in through the Swedish Public Employment Service.

The establishment programme includes various activities, and the goal of the programme is for you to learn Swedish as quickly as possible, find a job and support yourself.

The programme includes studying Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), participating in a social orientation course and undergoing education at various levels. You may need to develop or build on your skills, validate your qualifications or previous work experience, possibly get an internship, or receive support when looking for a job.

You normally participate in the programme full-time, which means five days a week, Monday through Friday, for eight hours per day. You can participate for a maximum of two years. All quota refugees attend the programme regardless of gender, previous education or work background.

If you have a child under the age of one, you will not participate because you will be at home caring for your child. When your child starts preschool, around the age of one, you can start or resume the introductory programme.

It is possible to take part in the programme part-time, for example, if you have an illness or disability.

[Read more about the establishment programme External link, opens in new window.](#)

Financial support

Many quota refugees need financial support at first in order to meet their living expenses. The goal is that you will eventually be able to support yourself and you are expected to be active in finding work.

The most common form of financial support for adult newly-arrived quota refugees is establishment allowance. You can receive this allowance if you participate in the Swedish Public Employment Service's introductory programme. An application for the allowance is made to the Social Insurance Office. The allowance will only cover your most basic needs, such as rent, food, doctor's appointments and medicine, some clothes and travelling by public transport.

There are other forms of financial support in Sweden. What support and how much you are entitled to depends on, for example, if you have children and what your housing costs are. Allowance payments are usually paid out once a month and require you to have a bank account.

In Sweden, most support is paid separately to each adult person in the household. This means that every adult needs to have their own bank account and needs to submit their own application for financial support. The municipality can guide you in how to open a bank account and how to apply for support.

In Sweden, financial support and public services are financed through taxes. Everyone who lives in Sweden participates in the welfare system and is required to pay taxes. Residents of Sweden are also expected to do their best to contribute to society and create good conditions for themselves and others. How much you pay in tax differs among municipalities, but the average tax is 32 percent of your income.

[Read more about establishment allowance External link, opens in new window.](#)

[Read more about and apply for establishment allowance \(in swedish\) External link, opens in new window.](#)

Childcare and education for children and young people

Sweden has compulsory schooling, which means that school is mandatory for all children from "preschool class" up to 9th grade. This is usually between the ages of 6 and 16. Most children continue their education at upper secondary level. Going to school is free, including all schoolbooks and essential school materials. There is no registration fee and no school uniform requirement.

Children and young adults start school soon after arriving in Sweden. Most young people who are aged between 16 and 20 years are also offered educational opportunities.

When newly-arrived children start school, teachers assess their skills to decide which class in the Swedish school system suits them best. The school takes the child's age into account and, in most cases, children are placed in a regular class with peers of the same age and also participate in a preparatory class. The preparatory class prepares the child so that the child can follow the regular teaching. The amount of time spent in the regular class and the preparatory class is different for each child.

Children with disabilities or learning difficulties can receive extra help and support at school.

Photo: Ann-Sofi Rosenkvist/imagebank.sweden.se

The following is useful information about Swedish school:

- School in Sweden is free.
- There is no school uniform or registration fee.
- The children receive schoolbooks and other materials free of charge.
- Boys and girls participate in all school education together.
- Children under the age of six go to preschool, so parents can work, study or participate in various activities.
- The cost of a place at preschool is based on the family's income.
- The food the children receive in preschool and school is free of charge.

Photo: Susanne Walström/imagebank.sweden.se

In Sweden, legal guardians have an important role in their children's education, as they are responsible for ensuring that the children go to school up to and including 9th grade.

Each term, legal guardians and children will have a meeting with the teacher to talk about how the child is doing at school. This is called a progress assessment (utvecklingssamtal). As a legal guardian, it is important to support your child by monitoring the school schedule and making sure the child is keeping up with their homework. It is also important to help the child with their homework if necessary.

[Read more on the Swedish National Agency for Educations website External link, opens in new window.](#)

Activities and support for adults over the age of 65

If you are over 65, you will not participate in the introductory programme. If you are over 65, you will receive financial support from the government. You are not prevented from working; on the contrary, in many ways, it is an advantage for you if you can work. Work provides a better financial situation and a good opportunity to be active and learn the Swedish language.

Even if you do not work, there are many things you can do, for example, learn Swedish, find hobbies and make friends. You can ask your municipality for information about activities and groups that could be of interest to you.

Common phrases

	English	Swedish
Welcome		Välkommen
Hello		Hej
How are you?		Hur mår du?
I am fine		Jag mår bra
Thank you		Tack
You are welcome		Varsågod
Please		Snälla
Sorry		Förlåt
What is your name?		Vad heter du?
My name is ...		Jag heter ...
I do not understand		Jag förstår inte
I do not speak Swedish		Jag pratar inte svenska
Goodbye		Hej då

Read more

[I have been granted a residence permit – Learning Swedish External link, opens in new window.](#)

[I am seeking asylum – Start learning Swedish External link, opens in new window.](#)

[Begin your new life in Sweden External link, opens in new window.](#)

Topics to discuss

- The financial support will only cover basic expenses. What do you think basic expenses means?
- Has the information you have read on this page changed the expectations you had about the support you will receive?
- Do you have any thoughts about what you need to do to become independent and a part of Swedish society?

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